

investigation that they are conducting with not just Democrats but also two very strong Republicans who have been willing to basically put their careers on the line because they believe so much in this democracy that we must get to the bottom of what happened.

The work going on in the Justice Department, which has now been, as of yesterday, as the Attorney General of the United States described to us, the biggest investigation in the history of America, because I don't think people had envisioned that we would have an attack like this, but we did.

Two hundred forty-four years of democracy—244 years of democracy—that it is our charge to protect, and that is why you see this investigation. That is why you see over 700 people charged. This is why you see the Attorney General pledge to follow this to every level and to follow the facts to where they go.

We must remember, in the end, as my colleague from Oregon Senator WYDEN has addressed, this is not just and was not just an attack on a building; it was an attack on our Republic.

I was looking back at the Inauguration Day and that beautiful moment with that blue sky, and there were little snowflakes coming down. I remember hearing the beautiful words of Amanda Gorman, in her gold coat, that day, with that amazing poem, the singing. I remember Garth Brooks singing "Amazing Grace." I looked up at the sky and thought that anything and everything is possible and our democracy has prevailed.

I remember the words of Abraham Lincoln, actually, which I quoted in my brief speech that day, when he gave his first inaugural address in front of this Capitol. The dome was only partially constructed—it was braced by ropes of steel back then—and he promised he would finish it. He was actually criticized for spending funds during the Civil War on the dome, as it was somehow frivolous. To those critics, he replied: "If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on."

When we gathered that day on that inaugural stage, there was still spray paint on the columns. They actually couldn't get it all out because the insurrectionists had first come to that platform because—just as they knew what was going on in the Parliamentary Office, they targeted that platform because that is exactly where President Biden and Vice President HARRIS were going to receive their oaths of office. There were still traces of spray paint. The windows behind us weren't the real windows; they were makeshift windows. But we all gathered there. The President-elect, now President, would not have his inauguration in a bunker. Senator BLUNT and I strongly believed that this should be a public event. As we stood out there, "The Capitol shall go on"—that was the message we were sending to the country.

So what does that mean right now, a year later, this anniversary, "The Capitol shall go on"? Yes, it means that we have better security, and we do better by our police officers, and we have their backs. It means that. We do better by the staff in this great building. Yes, it means we have accountability for the people who had the audacity to invade this Capitol and take the law into their own hands and commit acts of violence. But the other thing it has to mean a year later is that we carry on that torch of our democracy, as the Senator from Oregon explained, that we make sure our very democracy is protected.

(Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

That means guaranteeing that people have the right to vote.

What was not accomplished that day with the bear spray and the bayonets and the flagpoles sadly carried on because these bills that have been introduced in so many States and passed across the country—over 400 of them passed in many, many States across the country or proposed, seriously proposed, in others—bring us backwards. It basically says: You know what. Democracy—the people who propose these bills—is not about who votes for whom, regardless of who wins; it is about us choosing our voters and deciding haves and have-nots and who is going to be able to vote and who isn't going to be able to vote.

When you think about what the people of this country will do to preserve that right to vote—I think about those people in Wisconsin with homemade masks and garbage bags, standing in the pouring rain at the beginning of the pandemic just to exercise their right to vote.

I think about the veteran I met when we did our field hearing with Senators WARNOCK and OSSOFF and Senators MERKLEY and PADILLA down in Atlanta. This veteran told us that he had signed up to serve our country, and there wasn't a waiting line, but when he went to exercise his right to vote, he had to wait hours and hours—4, 5 hours—in line in the hot Sun just to exercise his right to vote. He told the stories of older people who had left because they couldn't stand the heat, they couldn't stand out there anymore.

That is not what our democracy is supposed to look like. It is not supposed to look like one ballot box in the entire county of Harris County, which includes Houston in Texas, over 5 million people with one ballot drop-off box. That is not our democracy.

But the American people in that 2020 election said: You know what. No matter what you do to us, we are going to go vote. And they voted in droves. They voted more votes than in the history of America. Part of that was because, because of the pandemic, changes were made to the law, including that some States took away ridiculous requirements that you have to get a notary public. Think about it—in the middle of a pandemic.

Right now, by the way, South Carolina has put this law back into effect. To get your mail-in ballot because you can't go vote in person because you have COVID, you have to have a notary public. There are stories reported in the news of people having notary publics, through the glass windows of hospitals, sign off on the application of ballots. All of that is designed, in the words of Reverend WARNOCK, so that some people don't allow some people to vote. That is what that is about.

So it is on us right now to carry on the democracy. And that feeling we had when the leaders of both parties all stood on that inaugural stage or when we took that last walk, Senator BLUNT and Vice President Pence and I and the two young women with the mahogany box with the last of the electoral ballots—that feeling was a good one, and it was a celebration of joy for our country and the peaceful transition of power.

As pointed out in our speeches on the Senate floor right after the insurrection—I remember Senator SHAHEEN standing right there talking about how the world is watching our democracy. Well, this is another moment. The world is watching as we see dictators coming into power in other countries around the world, as we see the former President still out there rallying the troops around this Big Lie that he somehow won the election when every single local election official in this country knows that is not true. This is our moment to stand up to that because the people are watching. Our kids are watching. And the democracy stands in the breach. This is our moment. We must pass the Freedom to Vote Act, and we must uphold our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, several months ago, I spoke of the hope we all felt that after decades of civil war, famine, and political turmoil, after millions were killed and millions more became refugees including thousands of "lost boys" and "lost girls," South Sudan's independence and a peace agreement would be the beginning of a period of lasting stability and progress.

Regrettably, what has unfolded since then is the antithesis of stability or

progress. The past decade has been plagued by continued ethnic violence, widespread hunger, and ongoing disputes between rival politicians who have been motivated by their own personal ambitions rather than building a democratic country or improving the lives of the South Sudanese people. Two individuals, President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar, are primarily to blame for fueling tensions and mobilizing support along ethnic lines and for failing in their responsibility to invest in public infrastructure, basic services, and the institutions of a multi-party democracy. The country remains divided, violent, and impoverished. The Parliament is nothing more than a hand-picked rubberstamp.

In S. Res. 380, which passed unanimously on December 9, 2021, we recounted the failure of leadership that continues to plague South Sudan. We said:

Whereas despite years of fighting, widespread suffering of South Sudanese civilians, punitive actions by the international community, and 2 peace agreements, the leaders of South Sudan have failed to build sustainable peace, and critical provisions of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict [R-ARCSS] . . . remain unimplemented;

Whereas the leaders of South Sudan have consistently failed to uphold their responsibilities to create the conditions for peace and prosperity, have prioritized self-preservation and corruption over the needs of the people they represent, have acted in bad faith in the implementation of cease fire and peace agreements, and have betrayed the cause of freedom, resulting in the loss of millions of lives; and

Whereas South Sudan has not held an election since its independence and the current leaders of South Sudan were appointed or installed through transitional arrangements based on peace agreements.

The people of South Sudan deserve better. Their children are hungry. They live in constant fear that the country will again erupt into civil war, and they will be forced to flee their homes yet again. It is a travesty that, despite billions of dollars in international aid, oil revenues, and black market loans, so little has been accomplished due to the whims and greed of two politicians. Where did all that money go, when the government does not pay teachers, or health workers, diplomats, or war veterans, or build schools, health clinics, housing, or roads, or otherwise address the basic needs of the people of South Sudan? Where did the money go when the government does nothing to protect its citizens and their livestock from drowning from the yearly flooding of the Nile River? Does anyone doubt that it ended up in secret bank accounts or to purchase properties far away from South Sudan?

I have spoken before of the People's Coalition for Civil Action—PCCA—a pro-democracy civil rights movement that seeks to mobilize the people of South Sudan in their pursuit of peaceful political change, which is their right. The PCCA and similar peaceful

organizations represent a rejection of war, corruption, insecurity, and poverty. They are calling for new, honest, and capable leadership that is committed to improving the lives of their people, to providing stability and security, rather than self-enrichment.

I note that S. Res. 380 calls on the Secretary of State to “lead a comprehensive interagency process to develop a revitalized United States policy toward South Sudan that . . . identifies South Sudanese political and civilian stakeholders, beyond President Kiir and First Vice President Machar, with whom the United States may work for the promotion of peace, democracy, development, accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts.” Supporting the PCCA would be a good place to start.

How has President Kiir responded to this praiseworthy demand for nothing more than that he and Vice President Machar keep their promise to lead the country out of poverty? Several of the PCCA's leaders have been arrested. Others live in exile, fearing that they too would be jailed if they return home.

I think of Abraham Awolich, one of the lost boys. One of his brothers was killed fighting for the liberation of South Sudan, and Abraham nearly died himself for the same cause, but he was fortunate to be educated in a refugee camp in Kenya and resettled in my State of Vermont, where he graduated from the university. He is one of the dedicated leaders of the PCCA who have called for free and fair elections so the country can finally have new leadership and leave behind a generation of corruption, violence, and misery. Abraham left the comfort of living in America and chose to go back to South Sudan to help build a new democratic society, but he has had to flee his country, and his assets have been frozen for speaking out and standing up for democracy and civil rights. This is wrong.

Others who are in jail for their peaceful advocacy are Kuel Aguer Kuel, Pastor Abraham Chol Maketh, Malik Angok, and Fadhia Ngor. Rajab Mohandis, Wani Michael, Joseph Akol Makeer, and Jame David Kolok are on the run for the same reason, their assets also frozen. Other advocacy organizations the government has targeted besides the PCCA include the Organization for Responsive Governance, the Okay Africa Foundation, and the Foundation for Democracy and Accountable Governance.

These individuals and organizations deserve and need our support.

I urge the South Sudanese authorities to release Kuel Aguer Kuel and all the political prisoners mentioned so they can begin this new year with their families. The government should also unfreeze the assets of the individuals and organizations affected and issue a public statement revoking any further threats against them and their organizations.

The repressive actions of the South Sudanese Government should outrage each of us, especially considering the billions of dollars American taxpayers contributed to secure South Sudan's independence and put the country on a path to a prosperous future. President Kiir and Vice President Machar have a duty to provide the political and civic space for their people to exercise their rights of free expression, association, and assembly and to petition for free and fair elections and for honest and competent governance.

Ever since independence 10 years ago, the people of South Sudan have struggled to survive under the suffocating oppression of the same two disgraced leaders. President Kiir and Vice President Machar have an opportunity to show real statesmanship, but time is running out. They should listen to the voices of their people expressed through the National Dialogue and step aside and give South Sudan a new beginning. The two could end the unrest in South Sudan with a public declaration of their intention not to contest the next election. Rather than delay elections as they have done repeatedly before, President Kiir and Vice President Machar should set a date for national and Parliamentary elections, in accordance with the R-ARCSS, and declare their unconditional commitment to relinquish power as soon as South Sudan's new leaders are sworn in.

In acting on this advice, President Kiir and Vice President Machar would receive international support for an honorable exit from power. Ignoring this advice, however, would result in further condemnation and consequences from the United States and the rest of the international community.

The text of S. Res. 380 bears repeating, because it identifies some, but by no means all, of the consequences that could result. It “urges the Secretary of the Treasury—

(A) to prioritize investigations into illicit financial flows fueling violence in South Sudan;

(B) to work with the Secretary of State to update, on a regular basis, the list of individuals and entities designated under the South Sudan sanctions program, including individuals at the highest levels of leadership in South Sudan and from within the National Security Service; and

(C) to coordinate, in cooperation with the Secretary of State, with the United Kingdom and the European Union on South Sudan-related sanctions designations and enforcement.”

What has befallen the people of South Sudan in the 10 years since independence is a travesty. Their dreams of a better future have been crushed. Their rights have been trampled. Many have paid with their lives or their freedom. Their government has become a subject of ridicule by the same international donors that staked so much on the good faith of leaders who have failed them.

Time has run out for President Kiir and Vice President Machar. The patience of the South Sudanese people

has run out. The tolerance of the international community has run out. They have squandered and abused their authority for far too long. They would be well-advised to stand aside so that others, chosen in a free and fair election, can begin the process of uniting and rebuilding the country. To that end, the United States can work with regional allies, Canada, Norway, the UK, other European nations, and church leaders to achieve a democratic and peaceful solution in South Sudan.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE LENOXBURG GENERAL STORE

• Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week, I recognize an outstanding Kentucky small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, I am honored to recognize the Lenoxburg General Store of Foster, KY, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

When Scott and Angela Horn took over the Lenoxburg General Store nearly 2 years ago, they inherited more than four walls stacked with merchandise. The illustrious history and culture of the store bring with it a tradition that the Horn's were determined to uphold and enhance. Founded by Sam Lenoxburg in 1938 during the height of the Great Depression, the General Store brought local farmers and tradesmen together for excellent meals and butchering services. It represented a gathering place for a rapidly expanding community and was the cornerstone of Bracken and Pendleton County. While large cities and towns had cinemas and famous diners to bring about this connection, it was Sam Lenoxburg's store that generated the communal culture in the tight-knit Kentucky town for generations.

Today, the Lenoxburg General Store continues to supply both general service and deli processing to its local clientele. The location remains a congregation hub, drawing folks from all over and the bordering counties to dine and shop with a traditional flair. Since the Horns took ownership, the store has branched into catering and offers delivery for local events across the community it serves. The location also hosts events of its own, including fish-fry contests and holiday celebrations. But most importantly, during this time, Angela and Scott have continued in their tradition of hiring within their community, serving as a boon to their local economy. This family-owned business has supported a community-first atmosphere in the store which attracts visitors and customers from surrounding counties.

Philanthropy and hospitality are crucial tenants to Kentucky's character, and the Horns exemplify these traits through their charitable work. Scott,

the local game warden, has partnered with Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry to deliver more than 1,450 pounds of venison to more than 350 families in need. The Horns are also involved with national charities and use their business to contribute to the Bracken and Pendleton tourism committees, along with the counties' 4-H programs. Lenoxburg General Store was heavily involved in the preparation and execution of the Heritage Days in Augusta, the longest running event in the area. Scott and Angela are committed to serving their friends and neighbors and get involved whenever they can to improve the lives of those around them.

The Horns' dedicated approach to supporting the store's family-like atmosphere goes beyond their praised home-cooked specials. As business owners and operators, Scott and Angela go above and beyond for their community and demonstrate how small businesses serve as the backbone of towns across Kentucky.

Congratulations to Scott, Angela, and the entire Lenoxburg General Store team. I wish them the best of luck, and I look forward to watching their continued growth and success in Kentucky. ●

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-2869. A communication from the Associate General Counsel, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, four (4) reports relative to vacancies in the Department of Agriculture, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2870. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Pyflubumide; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 9282-01-OCSP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2871. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Importation of Sheep, Goats, and Certain Other Ruminants" ((RIN0579-AD10) (Docket No. APHIS-2009-0095)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2872. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Handling of Animals; Contingency Plans" ((RIN0579-AC69) (Docket No. APHIS-2020-0101)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2873. A communication from the Director of the Regulations Management Division,

Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "OneRD Guaranteed Loan Regulation" (RIN0572-AC56) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 16, 2021; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2874. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: Peer Reviews of Contracts for Supplies and Services (DFARS Case 2019-D037)" (RIN0750-AK77) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 16, 2021; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-2875. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Protection of Privacy and Access to and Amendment of Individual Records under the Privacy Act of 1974; Technical Amendment" (RIN0790-AL42) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2021; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-2876. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), transmitting, pursuant to law, a semiannual report entitled, "Acceptance of Contributions for Defense Programs, Projects, and Activities; Defense Cooperation Account" and a semiannual listing of personal property contributed by coalition partners; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-2877. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "TRICARE Program: TRICARE Reserve Select Coverage for Members of the Selected Reserve" (RIN0720-AB79) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2021; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-2878. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Statement on Resolution Plans for Insured Depository Institutions" received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2021; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-2879. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to the National Emergencies Act, a report of the continuation of the national emergency that was originally declared in Executive Order 13818 of December 20, 2017, with respect to serious human rights abuse and corruption around the world; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-2880. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, a report relative to the issuance of an Executive Order imposing sanctions on foreign persons involved in the global illicit drug trade; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Mr. WARNOCK):
S. 3445. A bill to amend the Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016 to apply to